

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently amended): A method for controlling the absorption of a liquid sample through an absorbent layer, comprising the steps of:
 - providing an apparatus that includes:
 - an absorbent layer with a viewing surface;
 - a handle with a hole therethrough, the hole defining at least one sidewall of the handle; and
 - a non-fogging translucent window layer attached to the handle;
 - wherein an air gap is defined by [a] the viewing surface of [an] the absorbent layer, the at least one side wall and a surface of [a] the non-fogging translucent window layer; and
 - wherein the air gap is a chamber containing ambient air pressure, and
 - wherein the absorbent layer is permeable to gas when dry, but is relatively less permeable to gas when at least partially saturated with liquid;
 - applying a liquid sample to the absorbent layer on a side opposite to the air gap such that the air pressure of the air gap is increased, thereby controlling liquid sample absorption by the absorbent layer.
2. (Previously presented): The method of claim 1, wherein the sample is a human body fluid.
3. (Previously presented): The method of claim 2, wherein the fluid is a blood sample.
4. (Currently amended): An apparatus comprising:
 - an absorbent layer with a viewing surface;

Serial No. 09/914,684

a handle with a hole therethrough, the hole defining at least one side wall of the handle;
and a non-fogging translucent window layer attached to the handle,
wherein the viewing surface of the absorbent layer, the at least one side wall and a surface of
the translucent window layer define an air gap, and
wherein the air gap is a chamber containing ambient air pressure; and
wherein the absorbent layer is permeable to gas when dry, but is relatively less permeable to
gas when at least partially saturated with liquid; and
wherein the absorbent layer, at least one sidewall, non-fogging translucent window layer and
air gap are adapted such that application of a liquid sample to the absorbent layer
increases the air pressure of the air gap, thereby controlling liquid sample absorption
by the absorbent layer.

5. Canceled
6. (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 4, wherein the absorbent layer contains a reagent that indicates the presence of an analyte.
7. (Previously presented): The apparatus of claim 4, further comprising a second layer in contact with the absorbent layer.